

ER 60-7106/a

13 SEP 1960

Dr. Alfred B. Mason

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Dear Dr. Mason:

Mr. Dulles has asked me to acknowledge and thank you very much for your letter of 5 September.

We have read your comments with interest and appreciate your courtesy in writing to us again.

Sincerely,

Signed

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Assistant to the Director

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O/DCI [redacted] :bak(13 Sept. 60)

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60-7106

5 Sept., 1960

Mr. Allen W. Dulles
2430 E Street
Washington 25, D.C.

Dear Mr. Dulles:

James Marlow (Associated Press, 23 August dateline) quotes you as saying that although Khrushchev is not likely to start a war himself, he is certain to use all methods toward Communist world victory short of war.

I certainly agree with the main statement of this article, Mr. Dulles. But I wonder if we are not taking a little too much for granted in assuming that Khrushchev will not force a military show-down in the near future, or that "atomic stalemate" will prevent a military show-down later on.

This idea is ordinarily dismissed as ridiculous. My information indicates it is not so ridiculous as ordinarily thought.

I'll feel better if I pass it all on to you.

(1) Joseph Alsop (Aug. 10 and 14) reports that Secretary Herter is quite alarmed over recent changes in Soviet behavior; he warned the President in Newport that Khrushchev might pick election year for a military showdown. General Power of the SAC, added Alsop, begged for funds last autumn for a continuous air-borne alert. Both party platforms, presumably on similar grounds, call for an increase in defense funds.

(2) Plain rumor: In "Washington Whispers", p. 24 of the Aug. 8 issue of "U.S. News & World Report": military officials say that Khrushchev's tough policies today are only a warm up for 1961. Next year Russia will have a clear preponderance in missiles and will be tempted to challenge us.

(Unfortunately we can't check this directly by means available to us up to May. However, as a prognosis this is strictly in line with the developments of the cold war; year by year America's position gets a little worse, and Russia's gets a little better.)

(3) Khrushchev knows that no matter who wins in November, our next Chief Executive will be an unknown quantity and a formidable opponent--a young man with considerable education in power politics and a reputation for dirty fighting. Furthermore, he will learn rapidly from experience and grow much more formidable in a short time.

(4) More important still: Khrushchev is certainly aware that U.S. intellectuals are thoroughly fed up with endless retreats, empty "moral victories", and erosion of despotism in the Sweet Bye and Bye. Many are beginning to think of ultimate defeat of America, and the direct consequences to their personal lives; all of them realize that the answers for the totalitarian age are not in the Bible, and not in Adam Smith. It is even reported that this fact is the basis for Nixon's campaign--when and if it ever gets started. (See Harper's for August, 1960; also Victor Riesel's column for September 5.)

(5) At the beginning of the Berlin crisis in 1958, Mr. Khrushchev evidently

expected to win Communism's ultimate goal by blackmailing the West into one retreat after another.

Somewhere during the crisis, he received information that made him doubtful; at least, this is a reasonable interpretation of the Koslov and Mikoyan visits and his own last year. Perhaps our native Communists warned him that the U.S. wasn't so soft a target as his own slave press indicated.

At any rate, as the Summit approached he was plainly losing faith in his theory, and trying to regain it by crude threats which reached a peak shortly after May 15. Most analysts have explained the Summit collapse as his own way of avoiding a confession of failure; and it is significant that since then, Mao has openly challenged Khrushchev's intellectual leadership.

This challenge almost certainly reflects a wide-spread loss of faith in Khrushchev's victory-through-blackmail strategy, a loss which certainly must be present in Khrushchev himself. But if we may draw a lesson from Stalin's career, it is possible for the dictator to realize he is wrong and make a drastic shift in strategy without ever admitting this in public; and obviously the leader must be very careful about such admissions for more reasons than one. Clearly it would be very foolish for Khrushchev to admit that Mao is right, no matter how much he might agree with the Chinese leader, where the West could hear of it.

Thus the Mao--Khrushchev debate, and the switch in Soviet behavior since May 15, and Khrushchev's own behavior before and after the Summit, seem more consistent with a big switch in Soviet concepts of the road to final victory than they do with any other interpretation. It should be noticed that this is exactly what Mr. Herter is most afraid of.

It is my personal belief that if the Soviet Union can "co-exist" with the West, simply holding its own until a truly suicidal stalemate comes into being, Communism will win the world by default. The side which has always dared and suffered the most for victory will automatically win every engagement, provided the game of bluff-and-blackmail does not explode into suicide first.*

But the Communist method is not like democracy; it is not content to hope that the worst will not happen, but seeks it out and destroys it in utero. As listed above in paragraphs (3) and (4), Communism has reason to fear changes in U.S. attitudes and leadership which might end the contest before ever it gets as far as suicidal stalemate. They can be expected to make drastic plans to deal with this possibility, however remote it may be.

In short: the Kremlin could see an advantage to a military showdown in the next twelvemonth.

To justify the showdown, however, the Kremlin would need some assurance that it could survive one. What worries me is that I can see possibilities of even this.

(a) The USSR is far better equipped to survive a strike of any given force than we are, through its civil and passive defense preparations. They also have made extensive plans for post-strike offensive action.** To inflict equivalent damage, we have to hit them much harder than they hit us. If they could catch

* See Kissinger, H.: Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy, p. 347. Harper, 1957.

** Dinerstein, H.S.: War & The Soviet Union. Praeger, 1959.

a significant fraction of our SAC planes on the ground, a surprise strike could pay off for them.

(b) It would be more consistent with Communist strategy to force us to make the decision to initiate total war. Russia is in a position to start limited aggressions at many points where we cannot muster adequate resistance by similar means, partly because we have not matched her in so many fields of military power.

The cold war is now, however, at a stage where the U.S. cannot suffer a major set-back without losing the whole ball game. To sacrifice West Berlin for peace would mean, very shortly after, a snowballing surrender to Communism in Western Europe and elsewhere. Communism cannot expect to escape a nuclear exchange following limited aggression, and will not take that risk unless it is able to profit from one.

(c) This would be possible if the Communists could get their cadres and their military forces into European population centers before the exchange took place. Europe is reported to have only "trigger" forces to stop a Russian invasion, and the psychology of the West ensures that we would not respond to invasion with a nuclear attack without giving the Kremlin a chance to back down and our own citizens a chance to evacuate. This could consume some time if the Kremlin played its cards adroitly; and after the Communist leadership and its crack military forces were safely in Western Europe, an atomic exchange would destroy the industrial capacity of both Russia and the U.S.--leaving the industrial capacity of Europe, even today second only to ours, safely in the hands of the Communists.

I assume that the Communists would have no more trouble converting Western Europe into a military asset than Hitler did; the Czechoslovakian example is evidence that this reflects a general truth about highly civilized industrial populations under ruthless military direction. And I also assume that the U.S. would not be able to summon the cold nerve to convert our one-time allies and friends into a radioactive desert.

But with the Russians in charge of Western Europe, and no other industrial establishment left in the world to compare with it, there would be only a few years before they converted their assets into the means to finish the conquest of the United States. Even if we did destroy Western Europe and there were anything left of either side--the Communist discipline, its much greater area for industrial re-development, and the better civil defense preparations of the USSR might leave us in a far weaker position than we are today, even relatively speaking.

Furthermore, the reaction of the world in past military crises suggests that the non-involved nations would probably hold the U.S. more at fault than the USSR, since the onus of starting total war would be on us--and more so, if we followed the exchange up with a bombing of Western Europe. Thus the surviving remnant of the U.S. would be surrounded with lethal hostility and obstructionism, and its safest refuge would be to repudiate its former leaders and embrace Communism.

This is a sketchy picture, and I am no military expert. I would not be surprised to learn that the possibilities above have been considered and provided against by our survival planners. But it has happened in recent years that I did think of things which, it turned out, had not been provided against sufficiently.

So I submit this letter hoping that it may help my country to survive.

Respectfully,

Alfred B. Mason
Alfred B. Mason, M.D.
OBK, Univ. of Chicago, 1938.

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